

Raising standards, improving lives  
The Office for Standards in Education,  
Children's Services and Skills  
Strategic Plan 2007–2010





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# Foreword

John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation,  
Universities and Skills

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children,  
Schools and Families



When the new Ofsted published a first version of its strategic plan, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills contributed a foreword setting out why inspection matters. Since then, ministerial responsibility for the services Ofsted inspects has been refocused in two new government departments. But what Alan Johnson said is just as relevant today.

Independent external assessment is central in the drive to reform and strengthen our public services. Inspection and regulation are not add-ons. They set benchmarks and measure performance. They show how far providers are really meeting the needs of those they serve. They put authoritative information in the hands of users. They are crucial sources of advice to policy makers locally and nationally, helping to identify and share what works. They enable the wider public, who fund our services through taxation, to see how effectively their money is spent.

But inspection and regulation also need to be renewed constantly, to match society's changing expectations. We all now recognise how important it is to offer services which are coherent for the user, not just convenient for the provider. That is why the Government established a single inspectorate for children and learners: its unified remit enables the new Ofsted to respond flexibly to new ways of delivering services, and to the experience of users, including parents and employers. Our two departments are committed to this broader vision.

The heart of inspection remains the exercise of independent professional judgement by highly knowledgeable inspectors. Of course, inspectorates must have proper regard to the concerns of providers – in particular by keeping the 'overhead' cost of inspection and regulation to a minimum. Their work must be focused and proportionate. But inspectors' judgements are based, above all, on the interests of the users of services. Their reports are valuable only if they are genuinely dispassionate – however uncomfortable they may be for the recipients.

Demanding of others, Ofsted has set itself demanding aspirations. This strategic plan has been revised following wide consultation with those who use and those who provide the services in its remit. It charts a way ahead which will see the new Ofsted become one of the most powerful forces for improvement in the fields of education, children's services and skills. We commend it to all those with an interest in these key services.

John Denham      Ed Balls,

# Introduction

Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector  
Zenna Atkins, Chairman, Ofsted Board



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is a new organisation. But it builds on the strengths of four predecessor inspectorates. It will be known as Ofsted: it retains one of the best known and most trusted names in the public sector.

The reach of the new inspectorate is extensive. It brings together the regulation and inspection of day care and children's social care and the inspection of local authority children's services, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning, Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services, adult education and more. At least one person in three in England makes use of the services we inspect or regulate. This puts us in a position to make a difference to the lives of many millions of our fellow citizens, of all ages. It is a privilege and a great responsibility.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006, which established the new Ofsted, sets out three overriding considerations which we are required to bear in mind in everything we do.

- We are to promote improvement in the services we inspect or regulate.
- We are to ensure that these services focus on the interests of the children, parents, adult learners and employers who use them.
- We are to see that these services are efficient and effective.

This strategic plan sets out how we propose to discharge these responsibilities over the next three years. Listening to stakeholders will be fundamental to the way we work. This plan has been strengthened by our consultation with them. They gave a strong endorsement of the vision, purpose and values set out in the plan.

What we expect of others, the public legitimately demands of us. How does the new Ofsted propose to go on improving the way it works? Are we, as an organisation, relentlessly focused on the interests of users of services?

Do we provide the taxpayer with value for money? Above all: is Ofsted having enough impact? These, too, are questions which the strategic plan seeks to answer.

Not everything potentially within our remit is equally important during the next three years. We therefore set out our priorities – those things we are committed to achieving. Alongside these, we have now developed stretching measures of our performance. In some cases, even the process of measurement will take us into new territory. But a strategic plan which asked only questions to which we already knew the answers would be bland and ineffectual. We want this strategic plan to have teeth.

So we have, as promised, established baselines and developed methodology against which our performance can be measured: the results are set out in the second part of this plan, under our six priorities. We will review these targets annually to ensure they are, indeed, sufficiently challenging as we continue to establish baseline information more extensively across the range of our functions. We shall report annually, in Ofsted's departmental report, on progress towards each of these targets. Detailed actions and milestones to achieve the targets are set out in Ofsted's corporate plan.

We believe that, strengthened by the comments we have received which show wide recognition of the new Ofsted's potential to make a real difference to the lives of citizens, this strategic plan will enable us to respond powerfully to the challenges we shall face over the next three years. We shall go on improving our inspection and regulation within a tighter budget, developing innovative approaches which strengthen our impact. Working closely with others, we shall make sure that our approaches match the increasingly joined up ways services are provided for users.

Everything we do will be driven by our commitment:  
*Raising standards, improving lives.*

Handwritten signatures of Christine Gilbert and Zenna Atkins.

At least one person in three in England makes use of the services we inspect or regulate. This puts us in a position to make a difference to the lives of many millions of our fellow citizens, of all ages. It is a privilege and a great responsibility.







# Our vision

We inspect and regulate

to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages, thereby raising standards and improving lives.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills came into being on 1 April 2007. The new organisation brings together the wide experience of four inspectorates in order to make a greater difference for all children, young people and adult learners.

With parents and employers, these are the key users of the services we inspect and regulate. We shall listen to what they tell us. Their educational, economic and social well-being will help our country succeed.

We shall communicate our findings from regulatory visits and inspections to those who have an interest in our work, including providers of care, education and training; and administrators and policy makers. In doing so, we aim to improve current services and outcomes for children and learners, to raise aspirations and to contribute to a longer term vision for achieving ambitious standards.

We report impartially, without fear or favour, demonstrating integrity in all we do. But we work closely with our partners and stakeholders, including government departments and other agencies, to make sure that our inspection and regulation are used to realise our vision.

The new organisation brings together the wide experience of four inspectorates in order to make a greater difference for all children, young people and adult learners.



# Our purpose

We will raise standards and improve lives by:

- serving children and learners
- encouraging services to improve
- securing value for money.

## Serving children and learners

We take pride in making a difference for children and learners of all ages, and in helping to safeguard the youngest and the most vulnerable. We listen to what they have to say and take notice of what they tell us. We aim to command the confidence and respect of the public we serve, providing users of services with information and assurance they trust and can use easily.

## Encouraging services to improve

Rigorous inspection and regulation contribute powerfully to service improvement. We make sure that services understand what we report and how this affects their work. The professional dialogue which takes place between inspectors and those being inspected, detailed feedback and high quality recommendations: these celebrate what services do well and sharply identify what they should do better.

We use what we learn from our objective analysis to give providers and policy makers advice on what works, and what doesn't. We work closely with those given specific responsibility by the Government for ongoing improvement and consultancy activity.

In all we do, we seek the views of those we inspect and regulate, and those who use the information we provide, to help us offer a modern, innovative and user-friendly service which makes a practical contribution to better services.

## Securing value for money

We demand efficiency and effectiveness of ourselves and of the services we inspect, on behalf of the taxpayer and the Government who fund public services. We provide evidence about whether services spend their money wisely and whether investment in services is producing results. We focus our inspection and regulation where they will make the greatest difference. We continue to develop our work to be efficient and effective, reducing the demands we make on services. We will build on what is effective and improve the way we work to increase efficiency and to provide value for money.

Our purposes inform all our work and have helped us to determine our priorities for the next three years. These are set out in more detail later in this plan.

We aim to command the confidence and respect of the public we serve, providing users of services with information and assurance they trust and can use easily.



# Our values

Our values guide everything we do. They apply to everyone in the new Ofsted, and to those who work on our behalf. They are the foundation of our approach to leadership and management, and how we behave.

## Putting children and learners first

We start from the interests of children and learners of all ages, whatever their background, and the interests of parents, carers and employers. We take pride in standing up for the rights and opportunities of everyone who uses the services we inspect or regulate.

## Behaving with integrity

We build and maintain trust by behaving fairly and impartially in everything we do, with others and with our colleagues. We are highly professional, valuing our independence and speaking without fear or favour on the basis of evidence.

## Achieving excellence

We want to make a difference and set challenging standards for providers and for ourselves. Our impact comes from the way we provide encouragement and incentive for others to improve, and from our contribution in informing policy development. Striving for excellence ourselves, we seek always to learn.

## Valuing people's differences

We value and respect people's differences, both within Ofsted and beyond. Promoting equal opportunities and appreciating diversity are at the heart of what we do and how we do it: our commitment is reflected in our practice within Ofsted and in all aspects of our influence and work in inspection and regulation.



# Our work

## Our workforce

We have staff with expertise and experience: inspectors, analysts, statisticians and other specialists, together with administrative and support staff. They bring to the new organisation a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience drawn from:

- the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)
- the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration (HMICA)
- the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Bringing these people together, we provide expertise across the full range of services for children, young people and adult learners.

## Our partners

Our work relies on partnership with others. We have an important relationship with Additional Inspectors and with inspection service providers from the private sector who work with Ofsted to inspect maintained schools and some independent schools, further education colleges and adult skills providers.

Our information technology (IT) services supplier similarly plays an essential role in supporting our national workforce: over half of Ofsted's staff work from home as their base. Modern IT provision is integral to the efficiency, effectiveness and timeliness of our work.

More broadly, we carry out joint inspections with other inspectorates; work closely with stakeholders across our remit to drive improvement and disseminate good practice; and work effectively with other agencies to safeguard children. We greatly value our partnerships with stakeholders and the opportunities they present to share our work, to learn from others, and to coordinate our activities nationally, regionally and locally for the benefit of both the public we serve and the bodies we inspect and regulate. We will continue to work with the full range of our external and internal stakeholders to assist and support us in realising our vision.

## Who uses our work

Ofsted's remit is for England. At any one time, more than a third of the population directly uses the services we regulate or inspect, or the information we provide.

- 1.5 million children and their parents benefit from early years services.
- 8.1 million children and young people are in schools.
- 3.6 million people are in colleges.
- 385,000 children receive social care services.
- 1.3 million learners are in the workplace or in the community.
- 850,000 people receive training and support to help them find employment.

All these users should benefit directly from what we do.

Our work is also used by support services and agencies, local and national policy makers, government ministers and officials.

## Inspection, regulation and information

All our work is directed towards fulfilling our purposes outlined above: serving children and learners; encouraging services to improve; and securing value for money.

### Inspection and regulation

Inspection entails assessing a service against a published framework and criteria. It involves close observation by trained and experienced inspectors with knowledge of the sector concerned, informed by a range of data, background information, often including providers' self-assessment, and dialogue with staff and users of services. The output of inspection is normally the publication of judgements set out in a report, but can include other forms of presentation such as briefings, slides or pamphlets.

We inspect all the following services: childminding and day care; children's homes; family centres; adoption and fostering services and agencies; the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass); children's services in local authorities; maintained schools; some independent schools; initial teacher training; further education colleges and 14–19 provision; a wide range of work-based learning and skills training; adult and community learning; and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. We also monitor the work of other inspectorates of independent schools.

For a range of services relating to early years and children's social care, we also by law act as a regulator by granting licence to operate or trade. This involves registering providers who meet the legal requirements for registration, inspecting registered providers and investigating complaints against registered providers to see if they continue to meet the requirements. Where we find providers do not come up to the required standards we may refuse to register them, or take a range of enforcement measures, including prosecution.

Ofsted also has some specific powers to investigate parents' complaints about their child's school.

The Children's Rights Director, based in the new Ofsted, gives support to the rights of children and young people. Taking into account the views of looked after children and young people, he provides advice that helps us to make sure our inspection and regulation safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

We inspect and regulate services in ways that will be of real benefit. This includes driving improvement and giving assurance about standards, quality and use of resources. We know the cost of this work for the taxpayer and for service providers. We have a responsibility to ensure that the benefits of our work outweigh the costs.

Our work is proportionate to risk, and we therefore target services and service providers to safeguard children and learners in vulnerable circumstances and where outcomes for children, young people and adult learners are not acceptable. We focus on issues of national importance, particularly where there is a need for improvement in key areas.

### Provision of information and advice

Publications following inspection give users of services important information about local services. Through our inspections and inspection surveys, we investigate new initiatives and good practice so that our findings can inform their implementation and development. We use the very rich material gathered through our work to report publicly and inform national and local policy makers and support services. We are constantly looking for better ways to communicate and disseminate our findings.



## Consultation and evaluation

We consult users of services and our stakeholders regularly to ensure that we are focusing our work effectively and carrying it out in ways which those we inspect can understand. We take any concerns seriously and act on what we have learnt.

We publish consultation reports on our website, and we invite feedback through the 'Tell us what you think' section on our surveys and reports.

Parliament requires us to focus on the people who use the services we inspect and regulate. How we engage with users of services, listen to them and act on feedback are integral to everything we do – as we describe in the next part of this plan.

**We take any concerns seriously and act on what we have learnt.**

# Our priorities

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires us to carry out our work in ways which encourage the services we inspect and regulate:

- to improve
- to be user-focused
- to be efficient and effective.

These requirements match our purposes. It is right that our organisation should itself have the same commitment to improve, to be focused on the users of services, and to work efficiently and effectively.

This strategic plan for 2007–10 sets out six priorities to enable us to achieve our purposes. They derive directly from the requirements placed on us by Parliament. The first priority below is the most important; the others represent the ways in which we will make the first a reality.

## Strategic priorities

**Better outcomes – an organisation with impact**

**Better inspection and regulation – coherent, rigorous and proportionate**

**Better communication – clear and authoritative**

**Better consultation – involving stakeholders**

**Better value for money – promoting and delivering value for money**

**Better ways of working – delivering results through people.**

The following sections describe each priority, and set targets against which to measure our performance by 2010. The targets measure:

- outcomes in the services we inspect or regulate
- improvements in the way we carry out inspections or regulation
- the success of our engagement with users of services and other stakeholders
- Ofsted's improvement as an organisation.

Service providers have direct responsibility for outcomes, and Ofsted is not the only organisation promoting improvement. But since this is Ofsted's primary purpose, we believe it right that our performance should be measured in part by the outcomes for users of services.

Some of the targets set a single figure for improvement across all the services in Ofsted's remit. The services concerned are varied in nature and scale, and start from different levels of current performance. The target figures balance these factors as far as possible; a successful result will be one in which a substantial majority of services achieve or exceed the target. Detailed actions and milestones to achieve the targets are set out in Ofsted's corporate plan, and over the next three years we will place on our website specific case studies to illustrate in more detail how we are delivering our priorities.

## Priority: Better outcomes – an organisation with impact

We live in a world where we face ever increasing challenges. While life chances for our population are much improved, at the same time the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' is not reducing quickly enough. Frank and independent inspection and regulation help improve services and raise standards and so make a difference for all children and for learners of all ages. Inspection should identify and promote excellence, and help to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to make the most of their talents and to contribute to the economic success of the UK.

### What we know

- There is a childcare place, at least part time, for every three- and four-year-old whose parent or carer wants one.
- Over half of childcare and nursery education settings are good or outstanding and the weakest are improving.
- Standards have improved at the four key stages, but some groups of children and young people are underachieving and too many schools, especially secondary schools, are inadequate.
- The education colleges provide has improved significantly, but the improvements are not always sustained.
- The quality of work-based learning has improved greatly, but we are yet to see this in what learners achieve.
- Skills development for employment is increasingly focused on the hard to help, but the quality needs to be improved.
- Local authority children's services are improving, but children in the most vulnerable circumstances – such as looked after children – still get a raw deal.
- Our inspections provide parents and other users of services with information they find helpful.
- Our work helps providers to improve and avoid complacency.
- Our inspection surveys have a positive impact on the quality of care and education through their information on good practice and their influence on policy makers.

### What we will do

We will:

- make sure that our frameworks for inspection and regulation, and guidance on self-assessment, challenge all to improve; while we also focus sharply on weaker services and on the needs of underachieving groups and those in vulnerable circumstances
- continue to emphasise the importance of the five Every Child Matters outcomes
- increase the impact of inspection and regulation – raising standards, improving provision for all, identifying good practice, and safeguarding children and learners in vulnerable circumstances
- carry out focused surveys on those matters which are a priority for improvement locally, regionally and nationally
- regularly monitor and interrogate a wide range of evidence about outcomes for children and learners.

### What will happen as a result

- We will focus our inspection and regulation where they have the most impact in order to:
  - safeguard children, young people and adults in vulnerable circumstances, improve their lives and well-being, improve the continuity of care and break cycles of deprivation
  - raise standards for young people and tackle the attainment gap in schools
  - make sure that young people reach the age of 19 ready for employment, training or further study
  - raise standards for adults and tackle the adult skills gap, bringing people into sustainable employment.

### By 2010 – targets

- We will have made significant progress in reducing the number of children and learners who receive inadequate services: of those providers inspected in 2006/07 and found to be inadequate, the great majority will have become at least satisfactory and at least 15% will be judged good or better.
- The proportion of good and better provision in services we inspect will have increased by at least 10% from 2006/07.
- There will be an increase of 10% in the number of looked after children who tell us that their most recent change of home or school placement was in their best welfare and educational interests. There will be measurable improvement in the stability of placements and educational attainment of looked after children.
- At least 80% of service providers who respond to consultation will report that our inspections have had a positive impact.
- At least 70% of service providers who respond to consultation will report that they have used the evidence Ofsted collects and disseminates on good practice.
- At least 75% of our key stakeholders will judge Ofsted to have had a positive impact on outcomes for children and learners.

## Priority: Better inspection and regulation – coherent, rigorous and proportionate

In our first priority, we set out our commitment to improve outcomes for children, young people and adult learners. We want to make sure that our services are able to achieve this impact, by reviewing how we work and where we work. We want to offer a high quality, well coordinated and targeted service which reflects the interests of users of services and other stakeholders, and we want to find the most effective ways of identifying and disseminating best practice.

### What we know

- External scrutiny is valued when it is carried out by skilled and experienced inspectors who test and challenge services' self-evaluation.
- The best services know themselves well and have strong systems in place for self-evaluation which have a significant impact on the quality of their work. Light touch inspection may be sufficient in these circumstances, but weak providers need more and regular inspection to improve.
- Light touch inspection can occur where provision is good or better and there is little risk to users of services. Decisions about its application need to be informed by a rigorous assessment of risk, drawing on services' self-evaluation, performance and other data, the views of users, and other evidence.
- High quality inspection not only identifies struggling and failing services but also helps these services to recover and improve.
- Services do not make enough use of users' and stakeholders' views to identify the areas where they should target improvement.
- Services want access to better examples of good practice. Inspection and inspection surveys are an effective way of identifying this: information which is shared effectively can help providers to learn from each other to strengthen their work.

### What we will do

We will:

- coordinate as far as possible – across Ofsted and with other inspectorates – the scheduling of inspections for multidisciplinary providers such as boarding schools, extended schools and the secure estate to reduce duplication and overlap and increase the coherence of inspections
- make sure that all services have an inspection which is coherent and well matched to the needs of users of services and to the quality and reliability of the service, developing our ability to target inspection where it makes most difference
- evaluate the impact of light touch inspections to make sure they continue to stimulate higher standards and safeguard those in vulnerable circumstances
- improve our systems and work with partners to make sure that we recognise poor or declining services and instigate swift enforcement action where services fail to comply with the law that applies to their services
- develop our approach to risk assessment to ensure we use reliable, timely and user-focused information, interpreted by skilled inspectors who understand the specific remit/setting
- improve the quality of information to support self-assessment, challenging assessments that are insufficiently rigorous
- reduce further, wherever practicable, the notice period for inspection visits to make sure inspectors have the opportunity to observe services as they really are
- put arrangements in place which will help to ensure that through self-evaluation providers take account of users' views in order to improve their services; that providers tackle the needs of children and learners in the most vulnerable circumstances; and that providers of children's services can demonstrate how their service is raising standards across the five Every Child Matters outcomes

- use the views of users of services and stakeholders to influence how, what and when we inspect; to promote improvement; and as a basis for tracking how services improve in the future
- make sure that the way we give feedback to providers, by focusing clearly on action, has the maximum impact on improvement
- identify and share best practice, reviewing issues across our wide range of responsibilities and identifying potential for coordinated approaches
- report impartially on how government policy affects the quality of education, care and skills, and on areas of concern and high public interest, helping the Government to develop effective policy and use of resources
- share the information from our surveys effectively with users of services, providers, government departments, and other stakeholders, through publication on Ofsted's website and targeted communication of key messages.

### By 2010 – targets

- Proportionate inspections will be guided by consistent risk assessments across our remit.
- At least 70% of providers will be judged in inspections to be using self-assessment to help their service improve.
- At least 75% of users who respond to consultation will agree that inspection has a positive impact.

## Priority: Better consultation – involving stakeholders

We want to listen carefully to users of services and other stakeholders. We know how important it is for us to engage with users of services in ways that make sense to them. Their views are crucial in helping us to understand where we need to focus our efforts. They tell us what works and what doesn't.

### What we know

- Every Child Matters has improved the opportunities that young people – including those receiving care services – have to participate in decision-making and service delivery.
- We have strong partnerships with other agencies and services that are working with users of services and gathering their views.
- We report openly and regularly on the issues that users of services raise with us.
- We get good information about our work from the services we regulate and inspect.
- We need to get better at gathering and responding to the views of parents, children, learners and employers.
- Children and young people receiving care services want more stability; they also want to be listened to and to have choices in the decisions which affect them.
- There have been concerns that strong links with employers will not be maintained in the new Ofsted.
- Employers welcome the positive role inspections can play in helping them to make choices about their providers of training, and improving the way learners gain the skills needed for employment.

### What we will do

We will:

- find the best and most inclusive ways to engage users of services, stakeholders and partners
- find out how different groups want to be told about and have access to what we find
- increase opportunities for users of services to let us know about their experiences and what matters to them, and make sure that regulation and inspection focus on these issues
- look at complaints from the point of view of the person complaining, consider them fairly, respond to complaints clearly and promptly, and learn from complaints to help improve our services
- develop strong links with employers.

## What will happen as a result By 2010 – targets

- Our consultations will be accessible to users of services and we will publish the results of every consultation on our website.
- The number of people responding to our invitations to comment on consultations will have increased by 10%.
- All our inspections will involve the views and experience of users. Of those children and young people, adult learners, parents and employers we involve in the inspection process, at least 75% will agree that we listened to their views.
- Surveys will show that an increasing proportion of the population we serve has heard of us and knows how it can engage with us.

## Engaging with users' views and experiences

We want to hold an effective dialogue with children, young people, parents, carers, adult learners and employers about all areas of our work.

We involved users of services to make sure that their needs and aspirations helped shape this strategic plan, and we will continue to do so. We will measure progress against many of the targets in this plan through the views of users. We will:

- seek users' views and experiences during inspections
- work with existing user networks
- establish new user groups and panels where necessary
- hold innovative events to engage users and communicate in ways which they find relevant and accessible
- seek users' views through consultations and surveys.

In all our engagement with users of services, we will seek to follow best practice ensuring that:

- our approach is sensitive to the diversity of the population we serve
- documentation is accessible
- we will say what we will do as a result of what users have told us.



## Priority: Better communication – clear and authoritative

Our work is valuable if it improves outcomes for children and learners, and if it offers information to users about the quality of services so they can make informed decisions about them. We want to make sure that our regulation and inspection provide the right information to the right people, so that they can act to improve services and maximise their impact. We need to make sure that we present this information in ways that are accessible for users and helpful to providers.

### What we know

- The services we inspect and regulate touch more than one in three people in England.
- Information about our inspection and regulation helps services to improve – it raises the threshold of expectation and informs the targeting of support services.
- Inspection generates a unique and powerful pool of information. Service providers and others want better access to this information in an easy to use form.
- We influence policy development through our analysis and reporting. Many of our reports would be of much wider interest, but too few people know about them or use them.
- Inspection reports help parents to choose services for their children, but are sometimes written in language which is hard to understand and which says little about the character of the service.
- It is easy to contact us by phone, but we need to increase the range of our e-services, such as online application processes.
- Some of our administrative processes and the associated regulations need to be streamlined.
- communicate our inspection frameworks effectively to different audiences so that service providers and users of services know what we expect from a highly effective service
- establish a readers' panel to ensure our publications are clear and easy to understand before they are published
- make our information services on the website easier to use, and provide information more quickly to children, learners, parents, employers and others who want it
- set up web pages for service providers and users of services so that they can let us know their views on changes we introduce to improve the way we inspect and regulate
- identify communication channels which already exist to give us greater access to the users of services we inspect and regulate
- make sure that the messages we are giving are consistent across our organisation and provide accurate information to users and providers of services
- work with the media to make sure that key messages about our work are reported accurately and to relevant audiences.

### What we will do

We will:

- make sure that we publish all our reports and letters as quickly as possible, written clearly and concisely, in order to help providers to improve; and we will make them accessible to all users of services
  - develop or contribute to electronic libraries of good practice in key areas of our work, working with our partners to present and disseminate good practice effectively to inspire services as they try to improve
  - join up Ofsted's inspection information to give a more complete picture of local services, so that parents, adult learners, employers, local authorities and government agencies have clear information to help them choose and commission services
- ### What will happen as a result By 2010 – targets
- All our communications will be written in plain English, suited to their readers.
  - At least 75% of people who contact us will say they are satisfied with the way we have responded to the issues they have raised.
  - All routine transactions with us, such as applications for registration, will be capable of being carried out online.
  - At least 75% of users who respond to our consultations will agree that our information is accessible and easy to find.
  - The volume of media coverage referring to Ofsted accurately and positively will increase each year.

## Priority: Better value for money – promoting and delivering value for money

We are determined to promote value for money for the taxpayer in the services we inspect, and to report clearly on the value obtained from the investment of public funds. Ofsted itself will also provide value for money, making sure that economy, efficiency and effectiveness are central to decision-making at every level. We will redirect money from administration to our direct services, and develop new ways of working which help us to use our resources more effectively. We will meet all the financial challenges we are set, as described in the final section of this strategic plan.

### What we know

- Spending on public services must deliver both quality and value for money: value for money forms an important part of Ofsted's inspection judgements.
- The new Ofsted's functions cost 15% less than they did four years ago, and the Government expects us to reduce expenditure further by a similar figure.
- Introducing more online processes can improve the efficiency, effectiveness and timeliness of Ofsted's work.

### What we will do

We will:

- devote proportionately more resources to front line inspection and regulation
- use the strategic direction for inspection and regulation in this plan to lay the foundations for the further savings we need to make
- strengthen our management information systems to help us manage staff, information and resources more effectively
- make sure that our business support functions are efficient, provide good value for money and compare well against relevant benchmarks
- find better ways to assess and report on the value for money that providers of services deliver, making criteria for judgements more explicit
- compare ourselves with similar organisations in order to gain independent assurance of Ofsted's effectiveness and the extent to which it is achieving improvements in value for money

- monitor our performance against high standards for sustainable development and other aspects of corporate social responsibility
- reduce the costs to service providers of Ofsted's inspection through: better use of information Ofsted already has; more risk-based inspection; greater coordination when we inspect multidisciplinary provision; shorter notice periods; and more clearly defined expectations to minimise uncertainty and the time taken to prepare for inspection
- provide information to the public about the average cost of inspection.

### What will happen as a result By 2010 – targets

- Ofsted will make clear, evidence-based judgements on the value for money provided by all the services within our remit.
- We will achieve the challenging target of 30% reduction in costs that we have been set.
- While maintaining quality, the unit costs of our corporate administrative functions will compare well with organisations of similar size and complexity.
- Ofsted will have reduced the average cost of inspection per child or learner each year.

## Priority: Better ways of working – delivering results through people

Our high quality services and reputation depend on the performance of our experienced, skilled and professional employees, and the contracted inspectors who work with us. We will not only build on feedback from our employees and stakeholders but also learn from best practice in other organisations. We seek constantly to improve the ways we support our staff, and to become an exemplary employer.

### What we know

- People expect us to be leaders in our field, both as an inspector and regulator and as an employer.
- We have a very professional workforce, and as a result we are respected by those we serve.
- We usually attract high quality applicants to our vacancies.
- The contracted inspectors who work on our behalf deliver an efficient and effective service.
- We are committed in all our work to promoting equal opportunities and valuing people's differences.

### What we will do

We will:

- attract and retain people who are the best in their field, with the right experience, skills and competencies and from a range of diverse backgrounds, ensuring consistently high standards across our remit
- use secondment, both into and from Ofsted, as a development tool
- review our long term workforce strategy to make sure we have the right balance between permanent employees and contracted inspectors
- make sure that all our staff have appropriate professional skills, training to a continuing high standard all those who work for us and ensuring that the same standards apply to those who work in partnership with us as Additional Inspectors

- make sure that all those who work for us know how they contribute to Ofsted's vision, objectives and priorities
- review our systems and structures continually to ensure that they are the best way to meet our priorities
- strengthen our strategy for developing people in ways that help build a culture of learning, and enable us to learn from, and promote, best practice
- act on staff feedback to become a better employer for both home-based and office-based staff
- scrutinise our policies and practice to make sure that we and our inspection partners promote equality for all – whatever their race, gender, age, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation – in our own workforce and in the services we inspect.

### What will happen as a result By 2010 – targets

- We will have achieved Investors in People accreditation in 2008 and Investors in People Profile status by 2010.
- We will have pioneered an externally validated Equalities Standard to promote equality and diversity and help to eliminate disadvantage, particularly relating to race, gender, age, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation.
- We will have set up new contracts with trusted suppliers which provide high quality inspection services and deliver excellent value for money.

# People and resources

We are committed to using our resources as effectively as possible to achieve our strategic priorities.

## Our people

Our people are our key resource. It is their knowledge, expertise and commitment that enable us to deliver our extensive programme of regulation and inspection. Our strategic priorities require us to build on the expertise that we already have, to develop our knowledge and expertise in new areas and to share this effectively across the organisation and with our partners.

We employ approximately 2,700 staff across England; over half of these staff are inspectors. Our partners in the private sector, the regional and national inspection service providers, employ a further 1,100 inspectors to work on our inspections. We are organised regionally with offices for the south in Bristol, for the Midlands in Nottingham and for the north in Manchester, all supported by a corporate centre in London. We also have a customer contact centre, the National Business Unit, based in Manchester.

All inspectors spend much of their working time where they are conducting their inspections, but they can connect to Ofsted's systems through broadband from their offices at home. We are proud of our position as one of the leading employers of home-based staff in the public sector.

Our approach to people is based on developing a skilled and motivated staff who take pride in their work, find new ways of working and take responsibility for their actions. We recruit, train and promote them, according to their ability, to fulfil the requirements of the post. We are committed to the learning and development of all our staff in order to improve the performance of the individual, the team and the new Ofsted as a whole.

We are committed to equal opportunities and to valuing people's differences throughout our organisation and to processes and procedures that are fair, objective, transparent and do not discriminate. We make sure that we develop new policies and procedures to fulfil these aims.

## Our income and what we spend

In 2006, following a review of policy on the direction and funding of public sector inspectorates and regulators, the Government announced that it expected inspectorates to deliver a 30% reduction on their 2003–04 budgets by 2008–09.

In 2003–04, the year against which reductions were measured, the total relevant expenditure of the inspectorates whose work makes up the new Ofsted was £266 million. Ofsted's budget for 2007–08 is £236 million, including the one-off costs of creating the new Ofsted. We expect that, by 2008–09, our gross funding will have reduced to £186 million.

Much has already been done to reduce costs. Each of our predecessor inspectorates, over recent years, had reshaped its inspection and regulation to make them more proportionate to need and to improve cost-effectiveness. We shall continue this process, reducing our costs in line with the strategy set out in this plan, including further proportionality and targeting of inspection, and making our processes and administrative and support systems more efficient.

We believe that this approach will help to provide taxpayers, and those we inspect and regulate, with value for money from our services. The figures below show how we will spend money in 2007–08, broken down into four broad areas of work, with our administrative costs for business support services spread across each of these areas:

### Children £111m

- Early years care and education
- Children's social care
- Cafcass

### Learning and skills £26m

- Colleges
- Work-based learning
- Adult and community learning
- Prisons and secure estate

### Education £90m

- Schools
- Teacher training
- Joint area reviews of children's services (across all of Ofsted's remit)

### Cost of change £9m

- The one-off costs in 2007–08 of creating the new Ofsted

## Our Board

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills appointed the non-executive members of our statutory Board following open competition. Individually and collectively, the Board members have a wealth of experience across the full range of our activities.

Zenna Atkins, Chairman, non-executive  
Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector  
Dame Enid Bibby, non-executive  
Sharon Collins, non-executive  
David MacLeod, non-executive

Dame Jane Roberts, non-executive  
John Roberts CBE, non-executive  
Beryl Seaman CBE JP, non-executive  
Museji Takolia, non-executive  
Christopher Trinick, non-executive

## Our Corporate Management Team

Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, is the Accounting Officer for Ofsted and leads the Corporate Management Team, which includes the following Executive Directors:

Michael Hart, Director, Children  
Miriam Rosen, Director, Education  
Melanie Hunt, Director, Learning and Skills

Lorraine Langham, Director, Corporate Services  
Vanessa Howlison, Director, Finance

# Glossary

This glossary provides definitions or explanations of some of the terms used in Ofsted's strategic plan.

## **Benchmark**

A standard of how well services are provided in other organisations against which an individual organisation can compare its own performance.

## **The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)**

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service looks after the interests of children involved in family proceedings. It works with children and their families, and then advises the courts on what it considers to be in the children's best interests.

## **Coherent (inspection and regulation)**

Inspection and regulation which assesses services in ways that are well coordinated and make sense to the user and provider.

## **Every Child Matters**

An integrated approach to providing services to children and young people from birth to age 19, first set out in the Every Child Matters Green Paper ([www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)).

The Government's aim is for every child, whatever her or his background or circumstances, to have the necessary support to achieve the following five outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being.

## **Good practice**

Successful and innovative examples of the way in which service providers that we inspect or regulate have delivered their services or aspects of their services, and that might be used by other service providers to improve their performance.

## **Inspection (and regulation – see also below)**

The assessment of a service against a published framework and criteria. It involves close observation by trained and experienced inspectors with knowledge of the sector concerned, informed by a range of data, background information, the provider's self-assessment and dialogue with staff and users of services. The output of inspection is normally the publication of judgements set out in a report.

## **Light touch (inspection and regulation)**

Inspection which involves reduced frequency and/or less inspection time, applied to provision which a range of information suggests is high quality, and where risk to users of services, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances, is low. (See also 'proportionate'.)

## **Looked after children**

Children who are in the care of local authorities are described as 'looked after children'. They may live with a foster carer, with a family carer or in a children's home. Children become looked after when, for example, their birth parents are unable to provide care, either temporarily or permanently.

## **Policy makers**

Policy makers are individuals and organisations that influence the way services are to be provided to children, young people and learners. They include: ministers, civil servants (working within government departments or national government agencies), elected officials and council officers.

## **Proportionate (inspection and regulation)**

Proportionate inspection and regulation target more resources on those areas that need most attention. Where Ofsted identifies services which are particularly weak, or children, young people and adults who are in particularly vulnerable circumstances, we will visit those services more frequently and use more resources to identify areas for improvement and ensure that these people are safeguarded. Good quality services may be inspected less frequently or will have shorter inspections. Such inspection is used for high quality provision where the risk to children and learners in vulnerable circumstances is low.

### Regulation of providers

We grant licence to a range of providers of early years and children's social care services to operate or trade. This involves the registration of providers who meet the legal requirements for registration; the inspection of registered providers and investigation of complaints against registered providers to see if they continue to meet the requirements; and enforcement action against those providers who are not meeting the required standards. Such action may include deregistration or prosecution.

### Risk assessment

Analysis of the risks that children, young people and adult learners are not receiving adequate services by analysing services' self-evaluation, attainment and other data, the views of users, and other evidence.

### Service provider

Organisation and/or individual(s) (whether public, voluntary or private) providing services to children and learners.

### Users (of services)

Individuals who use the services we inspect or regulate. Users of services include children and young people, adult learners, parents and carers, and employers.

### Vulnerable (children in vulnerable circumstances)

Children in vulnerable circumstances are those who particularly need protection against harm and/or who need welfare services. A number of situations may make children and young people particularly vulnerable, including:

- living away from home
- disabilities (physical or mental)
- abuse or bullying
- race and racism
- child abuse
- domestic violence
- drug-misusing parents/family members
- families living in temporary accommodation
- living as migrants; victims of trafficking; or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or young people
- being young carers.

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